

March 28, 2008

Member of the California State Legislature
C/O Assemblymember Jim Beall, Jr.,
State Capitol
Room 5016
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Legislator:

I am writing to you to support Assembly Bill 2129 (Beall). The bill would establish a voluntary-participation program for counties who wish to implement a Screening and Brief Intervention (SBI) program for expectant mothers and women in their child bearing years.

Approximately 1 in 12 pregnant women nationwide reported consuming alcohol and approximately 1 in 30 pregnant women indicate they had engaged in binge drinking according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control. More than any other drug, alcohol is most commonly used by pregnant women. As a result, fetal alcohol syndrome is one of the leading known preventable causes of birth defects and developmental disabilities. Interventions such as SBI have been found to decrease the frequency and severity of drug and alcohol use.

Research has shown large numbers of individuals at risk of developing serious alcohol or other drug problems may be identified and helped through a primary care screening.. However, despite the evidence of their benefits, screenings and brief interventions have not yet been widely used in primary care settings, emergency rooms, state-licensed facilities and clinics. There is minimal cost associated with screening and the federal government provides matching funds for this purpose. California has been lagging in taking advantage of this funding and protecting babies.

As prenatal exposure to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs can severely damage the development, structure, and functioning of the fetal brain we can act to reduce this ongoing threat to thousands of unborn children. AB 2129 would allow more counties to provide these critical screenings and brief interventions and help expectant mothers give birth to healthy babies. For all of these reasons, I urge you to voice your support for AB 2129.

Best regards,

Name
Address